***LECTIO DIVINA* (Holy Reading)**
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES.
Sunday, February 7th 2016
5th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C.
For those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours, the Psalter takes Week One.

Before beginning prayer with the Sacred Texts, let us take a look at the week ahead in Liturgy, the Australian Church and the Social Justice Calendar.

In the Liturgy:
February 10: Ash Wednesday. This day marks the beginning of the Season of Lent. It is a day of fast and abstinence. The symbolic colour of Lent is purple.
No flowers are placed in churches in Lent, except for a Solemnity, such as St. Patrick or St. Joseph.
The Ashes from Ash Wednesday can be left under the altar with purple cloths – a continuing reminder of the exhortation we received on Ash Wednesday: "Repent and believe the Gospel".

In the Australian Church:
February 8: Broome – Episcopal Ordination of Bishop Christopher Saunders (1996)
February 8: Armidale - Episcopal Ordination of Bishop Michael Kennedy (2012)
February 12: Darwin – Episcopal Ordination of the Most Rev. D. Eugene Hurley (1999)
February 13: Syro-Malabar Eparchy – Episcopal Ordination of the Most Rev. Bosco Puthur (2010)

In the Social Justice Calendar:
February 11: World Day of Prayer for the Sick.
February 11: On this day in 1990, Nelson Mandela was released from Prison.
February 12: On this day in 1965 – Commencement of the Freedom Ride in Australia.
February 12: On this day in 2005, Sr. Dorothy Stang was murdered in Brazil, because of the stand she took against injustice to the poor.
February 13: On this day in 2008, the Prime Minister of Australia made the formal Apology to the Stolen Generations.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:
Isaiah 6:1-8
1 Corinthians 15:1-11
Luke 5:1-11

***Lectio*: Read the first text from the Prophet Isaiah, chapter 6, verses 1-8.**
Be aware of the way you handle your bible. Take it up reverently and read the sacred text with deep reverence. This text is given to all of us on this particular day in the Church's Liturgical Year, for our spiritual formation.

Meditatio: **Some background on the text, so that we can understand it more profoundly, and make our response to it.**
This text focuses on the call of Isaiah. The whole narrative spans 1-13, and an important part of the "call narrative is to justify to his contemporaries the prophet's teaching, unpopular as it might be…" (cf. New Jerome Biblical Commentary 15:17).
King Uzziah died in 742 B.C. Thus the "time" of the call is established.
The sanctuary is the holiest part of the temple.
The language is of a visionary nature. Therefore, there are similar themes found in the Book of Revelation: *Holy holy holy is the Lord of hosts.* Smoke and fire are indicative of theophany. In the Book of Exodus, we remember that the people were guided by the Lord's Presence: a cloud by day, a pillar of fire by night. Isaiah protests his inadequacy and he is cleansed by fire and set free to the extent that he can say: "Here I am, send me."

Read the text again a couple of times. Ponder on the text for a day or more. However, if you are aware of the Holy Spirit calling forth your response to the text, note it down. When the Holy Spirit prays within you or pours unction on a text and calls you forth, this is the true "prayer" (oratio) of Lectio Divina.

I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 1.

The Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 137
The Response is: IN THE SIGHT OF THE ANGELS I WILL SING YOUR PRAISES LORD.

Psalm 137 is a Psalm of thanksgiving to a faithful God. The reference to heavenly beings is surely a response to the vision of Isaiah in the first reading.

Take time through the week to ponder on this psalm and listen to the Holy Spirit calling you to respond to a line, a word, a phrase. This is the Holy Spirit praying within you.

Lectio: **Read the Second text from the First Letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians, chapter 15, verses 1-11.**

Meditatio**: Some background to help us with our understanding and our response.**
The text is similar to one part of the text from Isaiah. Paul too, proclaims his inadequacy. But this is where the similarity ends. For Paul also reminds the Corinthians that he persecuted the Church of God prior to his dramatic conversion.
The grace of God is the "power" within this text. It has transformed Paul from a persecutor of Christians into an Apostle of Jesus Christ.

Stand back from the reading and go about your work for a while. Maybe a day or two. Be alert to the grace of God. Listen to the Holy Spirit playing on the fibres of your heart like a harpist on the strings of the harp. The Holy Spirit will bring forth the most beautiful response to this reading. You will be surprised by the Spirit.

I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 2.

The Gospel Verse is taken from Matthew 4:19
COME FOLLOW ME, SAYS THE LORD, AND I WILL MAKE YOU FISHERS OF MY PEOPLE.

***Lectio*: Read the Gospel text from Luke 5:1-11.**
Read it slowly and reflectively, and maybe a second time. Try to read aloud rather than with the mind. Listen to the text as you read. Stand back from it and ponder.

***Meditatio*: Some background to help us understand the text and respond to it.**
Peter's boat is a symbol of Church.
The great haul of fish is a symbol of all who will become true followers of Christ, down through the centuries of time, by taking up the truth of the Gospel.
St. John XXIII called it "the medicine of mercy" and Pope Francis has taken up these words in his Letter for the Jubilee Year of Mercy. He says: "The Church gathers people into the heart of Christ through the medicine of mercy, not through the arms of severity." (Paragraph 4)
Peter says, in this Gospel text, "Lord, I am a sinful man."
Jesus does not reply with the words, "Yes, you are!"
But he replies with the words, "Do not be afraid…" And this is the spirit of the Gospel of Jesus: MERCY, COMPASSION, FORGIVENESS…

Read the Gospel text again slowly. Stand back from the text and the commentary and go about your work quietly ruminating. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 3.

EVANGELIZATIO: My lived response to the texts with which the Church exhorts me to pray. St. James says "Be doers of the Word." And the Book of Deuteronomy tells us that the Word of God is in our hands to do it.

1. My response is to share some of my own journey. In 1977, when I knew the Lord was calling me away from my Religious Congregation, a teaching Congregation, and into the Monastery, I resisted and fought against it. I was sure I couldn't do it and I ran from it as fast as I could. And yet the Lord pursued me. When it came finally to the farewell ceremony, my Presentation Sisters sang that beautiful Hymn of the St. Louis Jesuits, with the words: "Here I am Lord, it is I Lord. I have heard you calling in the night…" The only "fire" that I experienced was the "fire" in my heart, which was like a fire in the night, as I walked forward almost blindly into the unknown. So many of us have surely known this reality as we take up the ministry to which the Lord has called us within the Church. Mine is one of prayer and worship.

2. My response is to the words: "By the grace of God that is what I am", an apostle. Each of us could proclaim the same truth: "By God's grace, and God's grace alone, I am a follower of Jesus, and therefore have the strength to remain so." And, to quote Pope Francis, in this Holy Year of Mercy, my very credibility as a follower of Jesus is seen in how I show merciful and compassionate love to every other person. Only God's grace can equip me for this.

3. On the Solemnity of Christ the King, 2015, I celebrated 60 years since my First Communion Day, being one of the most sacred days of my whole life. On that day in 2015, a beautiful Sister in my Community gave me the following Poem of Rumi (1207-1273): "I stood before a silk worm one day. And that night, my heart said to me, '*I can do things like that, I can spin skies. I can be woven into love that can bring warmth to people; I can be soft against a crying face, I can be wings that lift, and I can travel on my thousand feet throughout the earth, my sacks filled with the sacred.'* And I replied to my heart, *'Dear, can you really do all those things'?* And it just nodded *'Yes'* in silence. So we began and will never cease." For me, the "we" is Jesus and me, who can bring the warmth of mercy, the softness of mercy, the wings of mercy that lift.

Lectio Divina is about reading the Sacred Scriptures and reflecting on them from an informed background. It is allowing the Holy Spirit to play on the fibres of my heart like a harpist, and bring forth the beauty of my response. In responding to the text, my life is changed more and more into Christ.